

SouthTown Star, April 17, 2009

Moved by the stories of families who have lost loved ones in a recent spate of heroin overdoses, including Homer Glen dad Brian Kirk, one Chicago-area congressman has introduced legislation to give federal law enforcement agencies more resources to fight the problem.

Rep. Mark Kirk (R-10th), of Highland Park, introduced a bill that would make border security grants available to sheriffs within 25 miles of the Mexican border and expand the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' Project Gunrunner program to track illegal weapons across the border.

Two weeks ago, 18-year-old Matt Kirk, who is no relation to the congressman, was found dead of a heroin overdose in the basement of his family's Homer Glen home.

Authorities believe he may have been killed by an extra-potent batch of Mexican heroin now in the Chicago area.

Aching and angry, Matt's grieving father Brian Kirk vowed his son's death would not be in vain.

"People out here are just blind, totally blind to what's going on," Brian Kirk said of the spike in suburban heroin-overdose deaths.

At least one politician said he's listening.

Rep. Kirk lamented the more than 30 people in Lake County and Will County who have died this year alone from high-purity heroin.



"We've just had this wave of deaths," he said. "Drug dealers aren't going to protect the health of their addicts."

The heroin has been tracked to drug cartels in Mexico and is part of a larger upsurge in Mexican drug violence, he said.